

(C) blending said resulting latex with said water-swellaable clay in an amount of said clay based upon substantially equivalent cationic ions of total of said cationic surfactant(s) to said cationic ion exchangeable ions in said galleries of said clay.

22. (New) The process of claim 1 wherein said water swellable clays are selected from at least one of water-swellaable smectite clays, vermiculite based clays and mica based clays.

23. (New) The process of claim 1 wherein said water-swellaable clay is a smectite clay selected from at least one of montmorillonite, hectorite, nontrite, beidellite, volkonskoite, saponite, sauconite, sobockite, sterensite, and sinfordite clays.

24. (New) The process of claim 1 wherein ions contained in the galleries of said water-swellaable clay between its platelets are comprised of at least one of sodium ions and potassium ions.

25. (New) A nanocomposite prepared by the process of claim 1.

26. (New) A nanocomposite prepared by the process of claim 21.

27. (New) A rubber composite comprised of a blend of said nanocomposite of claim 25 and additional elastomer(s) and/or additional particulate reinforcing filler.

28. (New) A rubber composite comprised of a blend of said nanocomposite of claim 26 and additional elastomer(s) and/or additional particulate reinforcing filler.

29. (New) A rubber composition which comprises, based upon parts by weight per 100 parts by weight elastomer (phr):

(A) about 5 to about 150 phr of the nanocomposite of claim 25,

(B) from zero to about 95 phr of at least one additional diene-based elastomer, so long as the total of the elastomer contained in said nanocomposite and said additional diene-based elastomer is 100 parts by weight,

(C) from zero to about 80 phr of at least one additional reinforcing particulate filler selected from carbon black, precipitated silica aggregates, silica-containing carbon black which contains domains of silica on its surface, and mixtures thereof, and, optionally

(D) a coupling agent which contains a moiety reactive with hydroxyl groups (e.g. silanol groups) contained on the peripheral edges of the surface of the platelets of said exfoliated platelets and reactive with hydroxyl groups (e.g. silanol groups) contained on the surface of said precipitated silica and said silica-containing carbon black, and another moiety which is interactive with said diene-based elastomer(s) of the elastomer(s) of said nanocomposite and at least one of said additional elastomers if said additional elastomer is used.

30. (New) The rubber composition of claim 29 wherein said additional conjugated diene-based elastomers are selected from at least one of cis 1,4-polyisoprene (natural and synthetic), cis 1,4-polybutadiene, styrene/butadiene copolymers (aqueous emulsion polymerization prepared and organic solvent solution polymerization prepared), medium vinyl polybutadiene having a vinyl 1,2-content in a range of about 15 to about 90 percent, isoprene/butadiene copolymers, styrene/ isoprene/butadiene terpolymers. Tin coupled elastomers may also be used, such as, for example, tin coupled organic solution polymerization prepared styrene/butadiene co-polymers, isoprene/butadiene copolymers, styrene/isoprene copolymers, polybutadiene and styrene/isoprene/butadiene terpolymers.

31. (New) An article of manufacture having at least one component comprised of

- (A) said nanocomposite of claim 25, or
- (B) a blend of said nanocomposite of claim 25 and at least one additional elastomer and/or reinforcing filler.

32. (New) A tire having at least one component comprised of:

- (A) said nanocomposite of claim 25, or
- (B) a blend of said nanocomposite of claim 25 and at least one additional elastomer and/or reinforcing filler.